



# CARNIVORE LEADERSHIP PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## ***Silver Bullets for Effective Leadership***

Volume 5: Through the Weapon's Scope: "Scoping Out Image and Fitness"

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## OVERVIEW

When writing EPRs, the one standard that is often overlooked is military image, under the assumption that a 'pass' on the Air Force PT test is sufficient to earn a 'Clearly Exceeds' marking under section titled "Standards: ... *Consider Dress and Appearance.*" Such assumption is negligent and must be addressed and corrected. Think back to when you arrived at Basic Military Training and met your Military Training Instructor (MTI) for the very first time. Their uniform was sharp, pressed and crisp. Their haircut and grooming were impeccable. Their military bearing was flawless. They were lean and fit role models. The Air Force saw it important enough to put the best in front of new recruits in order to make a good and lasting impression. They did not choose sloppy, unshaven, obese, or lackadaisical personnel for a reason: It is unacceptable and it clearly goes against our core values.

That was then, but what about now? Do you have the same positive image when you look at your supervisor, peers or subordinates? Are they modeled after our strict standards? When you look in the mirror, do you see a professional military man or woman? These questions should all be answered with a loud and thunderous "Yes!" The reality is that, for some Airmen, this would not be the case. We need to take control of the situation by enforcing the rules. If we do not, we will continue to waste funds training personnel who get separated because of a lack of discipline.

It is time to draw our weapons in tight to our shoulders, place our eagle eye next to the scope aperture, gaze through the lens, and fix our sights upon the target. Are we the 'ready warriors' the Air Force expects us to be? Are we the capable force according to Air Force standards, and not to our personal arbitrary rules? Have we come to accept out-of-shape military members while others pick up their slack? Many personnel have a fogged lens and we must help them see the problem they are failing to engage.

Let's truly scope the issue: Our image and fitness.

## SCOPING OUT OUR IMAGE AND FITNESS

**THE FOLLOWING MATERIAL, EXTRACTED FROM AFI 1-1, CH. 3, STATES THE IMPORTANCE OF IMAGE AND FITNESS:**

3.1. Overview. *First impressions are often drawn based upon appearance. ... Projecting a good military image reflects not only on you personally, but also on the Air Force. Appearance matters both on and off-duty and involves more than just the clothes you wear. Projecting a professional image is paramount.*

3.2. Dress and Personal Appearance. *Pride in one's personal appearance ... [is] essential to an effective military force. All Air Force members must maintain a high standard of dress and personal appearance ... neatness, cleanliness, safety, uniformity, and military image. ... it is critical because other people, both military and civilian, draw certain conclusions about individual Airmen and the Air Force based on what they see.*

3.5. Physical Fitness. *Air Force members must be physically fit to support the Air Force mission. ... by maintaining a lean and fit appearance, Air Force members project the proper military image. ... The fitness assessment [is the] tool [for commanders] in determining ... fitness. ... each Air Force member is ... responsible for keeping himself or herself in good physical condition.*

## SCOPING THE TARGET WITHOUT DUST COVERS OR FOG

When we purge AFI 1-1 of fluff (like we did in the above paragraphs) and extract the key points and intent of the letter, it reads like an operational checklist: "must" means must, not "may" or "can" or "It's up to you." It means that the subject is a matter of policy, that it is 'carved in stone' and not up for debate or discussion. What is 'lean and fit'? For starters, it could be a way of living by developing a habit to exercise daily or change your diet. 'Lean and fit' requires change, a self-initiated change.

How many times do we see personnel taking elevators or escalators instead of the stairs? Why do we carry size 46 trousers and size 50 blouses outside of maternity clothes in our clothing sales when the max acceptable waist circumference is 39.5 inches? How many personnel do we see circling the parking lot at the BX or Commissary looking for the parking spot closest to the door when there are many available just 25 meters away? How many times do we see personnel outside of the “mandatory PT sessions” taking care of themselves by being active? How about the amount of Airmen that can’t run 1.5 miles without nearly having a seizure?

The truth of the matter is that we are not doing enough to get these standard violators on track by continuing to ignore them and letting them reap the same rewards as our best Airmen. The shame of it all is that very few have valid medical issues, most are just allies of laziness. Enough is enough. They are your target, they are in your cross-hairs, and you need to engage by taking action.

### **WHO OWNS THE SIGHT PICTURE?**

All of us. Commanders do by incorporating a good, strong fitness program into their organizations and ensuring accountability at all levels. Supervisors do by ensuring the commander's programs--to include the EPR--are maintained and their Airmen remain fit, healthy, and in good readiness to execute the mission. As individual Airmen, we have a duty and responsibility to be ready at all times to perform our assigned mission--which is anything the Air Force asks us to do--and to be a positive representative of our service. Peer pressure to be the absolute best must be present at all levels, but most importantly in the duty section. We have to pull our own weight; when you have too much of it or lack the strength to hold your own, that task becomes harder and someone else would have to pull your slack. If that sight picture we see in the mirror, in the duty center, or in our community is not in accordance with the intent of what we know to be the Air Force standard, then we are failing. Lack of action implies acceptance of lack of standards.

Lack of standards hinders our credibility. Lack of credibility hinders trust. All because of failing to correct a simple issue.

## **HERE'S SOME ADVICE FROM YOUR COMMAND CHIEF:**

### **For every Airman:**

Take care of yourself both physically and mentally; be the example and the professional you are expected to be. Do not seek medical waivers in order to dodge the fitness assessment. These so-called "timely convenient" waivers are a dangerous habit that will only make matters worse and affect your progress in attaining a proper image and fitness level. Always seek improvement and show progression on your PT scores; do not be stagnant. When donning the Air Force uniform, take pride instead of taking shortcuts. Proper wear of the uniform--to include the PTU--is an indicator of your loyalty and commitment to service. Do not accept ratings and rewards you have not earned. If your supervisor lacks the guts to identify that you are falling short of the mark, ask them why they are not holding you accountable. Be open to constructive criticism, own your failures and learn from them. Also, share your successes with others in similar situations in order to prevent failure. Develop two-way communications with your supervisor and ask for frequent feedback. Lastly, correct up and down the chain when the standards are violated--rank does not exempt anyone from being corrected.

### **For supervisors:**

If your personnel do not measure up, hold them accountable. Failure to enforce any standard reflects poorly on your leadership and accountability--your EPR has a block on how well you enforce standards, it is your duty. Do not compromise for obesity by saying, "they are just thick," or "big-boned," or "large and in charge." The same goes for those who meet body composition but fail to wear the uniform properly or are weak and lazy due to lack of motivation. Instead of justifying their shortcomings, have the moral courage to look them in the eye, address the issue, and correct the problem. An Airman can be a great technician, but that does not earn them a pass to be exempt from all the

other Air Force requirements. An Airman can be great at PT and look great in uniform, but that would not earn them a pass to not perform their assigned mission. In life, nothing of worth comes easy; it requires hard work from individuals and help and guidance from those who lead them. Be good to them, tell them the truth, and help them overcome their weaknesses while sharpening their strengths.

**For senior leaders:**

Be a filter for excellence, pushing up only the most deserving for rewards to include decorations, endorsements, and stellar reports. Properly advise your commander and maintain the integrity of the system by verifying the data. Hold personnel accountable at all levels, including those in your staff. Not doing so indicates a tolerance for substandard behavior and individuals that could--and most likely--diminish the credibility of your organization. The tone gets set at the top and, in the end, you deserve what you tolerate. Also, get in the habit of 'rating the rater' on their ability to enforce the standards, they have the first-hand look and have a responsibility to do so. This is about more than just a PT test: It is about the readiness, image, and health of our force. Let your expectations be known, all while leading from the front and setting the pace.

**Bottom line, clear the fogged lens: Let's not turn the blind eye to the issue of disregarding a proper military image and fitness. Some people need a wake up call, and I know of no better alarm clock than the honest truth. Whether it comes from others or from within, the desired result is clear: Excellence in All We Do.**

**Our mission is to "Fly, Fight, and Win", not to "Sit, Get Beat, and Lose." When mediocrity gets in your cross-hairs, eliminate it at first sight. Care for what you own: the mission and the people.**

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